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UNITED NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.3/1994/12
30 March 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Special session
11-15 April 1994
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

Inter-Agency Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty (Convener: World Bank), which is contained in the annex. The report is transmitted to the Commission in accordance with a request of its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination at its sixteenth session (Geneva, 13-16 September 1993) (E/CN.3/1994/2, para. 11).

* E/CN.3/1994/1.

Annex

REPORT OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON THE MEASUREMENT OF POVERTY

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, at its twenty-seventh session (6-8 September 1993) noted that many organizations were concerned with the question of poverty and were taking initiatives on data, measurement and other aspects of the question; agreed to establish a Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty and requested the World Bank to act as convener and to associate the regional commissions with it. Draft terms of reference were adopted subject to further review by the World Bank and the Bureau of the Subcommittee (E/CN.3/1994/4, para. 27 (b)).

2. The Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, at its sixteenth session (13-16 September 1993), confirmed the establishment of a task force on the measurement of poverty, reflecting the need for expanded coordination work in this field, which had been set as a priority area by many organizations. It expressed its appreciation of the willingness of the World Bank to act as convener and requested the World Bank to associate the regional commissions with the work, as considerable developmental and measurement work was proceeding at the regional level (E/CN.3/1994/2, para. 15).

3. In the months since the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities last met, extensive consultations have taken place between several agencies. These consultations have led to the identification of a set of issues which will be the focus of the work to be undertaken by the Task Force. The main areas of work to be covered in the near term are as follows:

(a) To prepare a situation or review paper, describing the activities of the various organizations involved in poverty measurement and the approaches they are adopting to do so. The review would be expected to look at both methods of collection and sources of data (household and community surveys, sentinel site surveillance, other forms of qualitative and quantitative assessment techniques), and at techniques for preparing poverty indicators from these data (poverty lines and their determination, poverty indicators and others);

(b) To pull together different definitions of poverty, oriented towards the type of measurement being used (lack of monetary or non-monetary income, lack of assets, lack of access to so-called basic goods and services, lack of means to develop human capital - education, health and others);

(c) To compare the different approaches to measurement of poverty, highlighting the relative strengths and weaknesses of each, with a view to proposing how different methods may be used to complement one another.

4. Terms of reference incorporating these aspects are near completion. The Task Force will meet and identify a shared work programme to enhance coordination and to determine areas where greater attention in sharpening the underlying concepts and methods is required. At its first meeting, the Task

Force should set priorities and establish a work programme and a time-frame within which actions are to be completed. Task Force members would be expected to play active roles in undertaking the above activities and to share the work in producing timely outputs. The Task Force will ensure that the results of its work are widely shared with all involved organizations and will report further on progress.